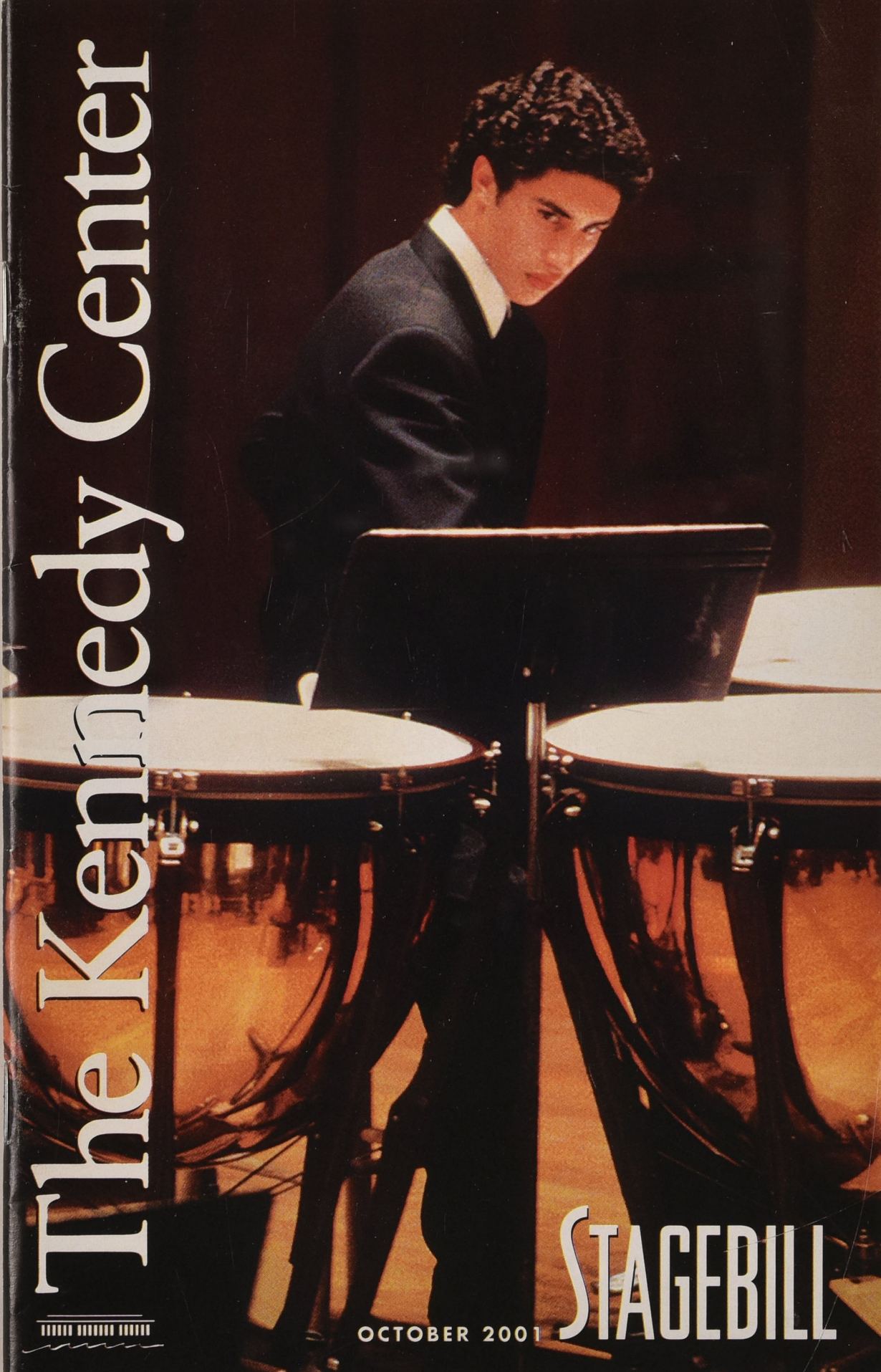


# The Kennedy Center



OCTOBER 2001

# STAGEBILL



# The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

JAMES A. JOHNSON, *Chairman*  
MICHAEL M. KAISER, *President*

EISENHOWER THEATER

*October 19 and 20, 2001*

## The Kennedy Center

presents

### Bangarra Dance Theatre

*Stephen Page, Artistic Director*

in

## Corroboree

*Director and Choreographer: Stephen Page*

*Creative Cultural Consultant: Djakapurra Munyarryun*

*Composers: David Page and Steve Francis*

*Music Producer: Steve Francis*

*Set Design: Peter England, (for "Roo") John Matkovic and Stephen Page*

*Lighting Design: Karen Norris and (for "Roo") Joseph Mercurio*

*Costume Design: Jennifer Irwin*

### Company

Joel Blanco Victor Bramich Yolande Brown Elma Kris

Lewis Lampton Peggy Misi Djakapurra Munyarryun

Russell Page Frances Rings Desley Roberts

Sidney Saltner Peta Strachan Sani Townson

Brett Davidson

*General Manager*

Jasmine Gulash

*Assistant Artistic Director*

Nina Veretennikova

*Rehearsal Director*

John Colvin

*Production Manager*

*This performance is 85 minutes in length. There will be no intermission.*

*Program and casting is subject to change.*

Patrons are requested to turn off pagers, cellular phones, and signal watches during performances.

The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in this auditorium.

Baldwin is the official piano and electronic organ of the Kennedy Center.

### **Awakening**

*Dancer: Djakapurra Munyarryun*

Dancer and songman Djakapurra Munyarryan performs a sacred Aboriginal body painting ritual. The ritual acts as a unifying force, preparing the spirit who will guide us on a mesmerizing journey through the celebration of dance and song.

### **Hunting and Gathering**

*Dancers: Female Ensemble*

An abstract portrayal of traditional hunting and gathering methods inspired by Aboriginal women who nurture and maintain the land—they hunt, prepare powerful “bush” medicines, and use digging sticks to find nourishment in the harsh Australian earth.

### **Dingo**

*Dancers: Male Ensemble featuring Russell Page*

A sacred and powerful initiation ceremony from traditional Aboriginal men’s law—a young boy becomes a man and is given the totem of the Dingo, Australia’s wild dog.

### **Nesting**

*Dancers: Female Ensemble*

Aboriginal women gather for “women’s business” on a sacred ground, where a woman conceives a spirit through the land. The birthing sequence follows her journey through the grief of a stillbirth to the final cleansing and release of the spirit.

### **Cocoon**

*Dancer: Sidney Saltner*

The spirit travels and searches for a meeting ground, a place of rebirth.

### **Toxic**

*Dancers: Female Ensemble*

A raw and powerful story about the effect of mining projects on traditional desert homelands and culture. Jagged bodies struggle and convulse with toxins.

### **Roo**

*Dancers: Full Ensemble*

A line-up of young, urban Aboriginal men is being interrogated about who they are. They have been wounded by social abuse. An elder spirit from the bush calls them back to cleanse their spirits on the “stomping ground” of the powerful Red Kangaroo.

### **White**

*Dancers: Full Ensemble*

At dawn, Mother Earth yawns. Her call engulfs the *white ochre* spirits. The *white ochre* (clay pigment) protects all spirits on their journey.

## Director's Note

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A *corroboree* is a meeting ground, a “stomping” ground, where Aboriginal people gather to evoke the Dreamtime through sacred rituals, dance, and song. The Dreamtime is at the heart of our spirituality, a time when our totemic ancestral beings appeared and created the land. With this production, Bangarra is inviting audiences to journey with us to this sacred ground—to challenge, awaken, and cleanse their spirits. It is about the transformation of the human spirit and the relationship between Aboriginal people, creatures, and the land. There's a wonderful trust and exchange with the audience of a Bangarra performance. We guide you on a journey. It's a meeting of the urban, social, traditional dreaming and pure abstract dance—that's why we can speak to all peoples. Passion, emotion, and respect—this is why people have to survive; it's got to be part of the human immune system. If you are honest to the process it will naturally attract those people who want to listen. Working on the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games

Opening Ceremony affected me a lot. Bringing together 1,000 Aboriginal people, all the elders trusting me to take their stories and put it on that ground, drawing black clans together, gathering in our own backyard. I think we, as a black nation, need to get together and work sacredly to develop a new language. We have to wear many survival totems. We have to have the tough goanna skins so that we can continue our journey. I believe that's what Bangarra is committed to doing—building a foundation, a strong spiritual philosophy that people can work from to tell whatever dreaming they want, in whatever medium. *Corroboree* is a conscious awakening of the spirit. It's challenging the political arena, and it's about just being good young artists that take on the responsibilities and disciplines of maintaining this evolving storytelling. Bangarra is living the Dreaming; it's the Dreaming becoming in front of our eyes.

— Stephen Page, *Artistic Director*

## Bangarra Dance Theatre

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**Bangarra Dance Theatre** is one of the youngest and the oldest of Australia's dance companies. Its living traditions go back at least 40,000 years and encompass Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Bangarra also reflects the lives and attitudes of Australian indigenous people today. Steps that have pounded the dust of a dry continent for so long are the source of a truly Australian dance language. Mingling with international dance influences and creating its own unique shapes and rhythms, Bangarra shares stories that are entwined with indigenous spirituality and philosophy. The Company was formed in 1989 by Carole Johnson, founding director of NAISDA (Australia's national indigenous dance school), and a group of graduate students. In 1991 Stephen Page was appointed artistic director, and the following year he choreographed the company's first full-length work, *Praying Mantis Dreaming*. The response was electric, and Bangarra's future success was assured. While his enormous creative energy had long been noted,

it was as chief choreographer for Bangarra that Stephen Page developed a unique and specific dance language, which combined his Aboriginal heritage with his urban lifestyle. In 1995 *Ochres* became another breakthrough, both for the company and for Australian dance. Choreographed by Stephen Page and Bernadette Walong with artists from Bangarra, it was a runaway hit with audiences and a revelation for dance critics both in Australia and overseas. The key to *Ochres*, and the works that follow, is the close collaboration of the creative team. The remarkable Djakapurra Munyarryun is Bangarra's cultural consultant as well as leading dancer, virtuoso didjeridoo player, and songman. With the permission of the elders of the Munyarryun Clan in Dhalinbuy, North East Arnhem Land, where he grew up, Djakapurra is the source of Bangarra's traditional knowledge. Other members of the company's creative team include Mr. Page's brother, David Page, and Steve Francis, who composes and produces the haunting music of Bangarra's works. David and Steve's music mirrors

Stephen's dance by entwining elements of past and present—traditional and ancient percussive instruments and modern technology. Above all, there are the extraordinary Bangarra dancers. It is their dedication and willingness to journey with Stephen that enables him to continue to realize his creative vision. In 1997 Stephen created another benchmark, *Rites*, in which Bangarra Dance Theatre joined forces with Australia's national classical company, the Australian Ballet. Premiering at the 1997 Melbourne Festival, *Rites* traveled to New York's City Center in 1999, and the United States had its first glimpse of Stephen's remarkable dance style. The year 2000 was a milestone. Stephen directed the indigenous segment of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games as well as *Tubowgule*, the opening ceremony of the Olympic Arts Festival. Also for the festival, Bangarra premiered a new work, *Skin*, at the Sydney Opera House, which won Stephen and Bangarra Australia's coveted Helpmann Award for Best New

Australian Work and Best Dance Work in 2000. Bangarra's involvement with the "Awakenings" segment of the Opening Ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games forged new links with isolated indigenous communities in Australia's vast Central Desert. As a result, in April of 2001, 12 dancers and seven production crews traveled to tiny Umuwa, 500 kilometers south of Uluru (the Aboriginal name for Ayers Rock), and involved young people there in workshops under the watchful eyes of elders from the region. The visit culminated in Bangarra performing for the local people in a dry creek bed! Bangarra's journey of success continues. Stephen Page's new masterpiece—*Corroboree*—completed a national tour of Australia this year to outstanding popular and critical acclaim. A rich visual feast and a return to a purity of dance and tradition, *Corroboree* embraces the Dreamtime—a time when animal spirits occupied the land without the influence of humans.

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## Who's Who

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**Stephen Page** (*Artistic Director*) descended from the Noonukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambah nation in Queensland. He danced with the Sydney Dance Company until 1991, when he was appointed artistic director of Bangarra Dance Theatre. With his works *Praying Mantis Dreaming*, *Ninni*, and *Ochres*, he established milestones for the company and for Australian dance. In 1996 Mr. Page created *Alchemy* for the Australian Ballet, and the following year brought the Australian Ballet and Bangarra together for *Rites* set to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, which performed at the Sydney Opera House and New York's City Center. In 2000 *Fish* premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival before traveling to the Sydney Opera House for the Indigenous Festival of the Dreaming. Mr. Page choreographed the festival's opening event, and the company premiered *Skin* for the Olympic Arts Festival. He also choreographed for the flag handover ceremony at the Atlanta Olympic Games and directed the indigenous segments of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games. Mr. Page's other credits include indigenous Australians' participa-

tion in the opening of the 1993 World Youth Soccer Championship in Sydney; the contemporary operatic film *Black River*, winner of the Grand Prix Opera Screen 1993 in Paris; *Pride* for ABC-TV; *Black Vine*, a celebration of indigenous song and dance; a new Australian musical entitled *The Wedding Song*; and numerous rock videos.

**Djakapurra Munyarryun** (*Cultural Consultant, Senior Dancer, Musician*) was born in Yirrkala, a member of the Munyarryun clan in northeast Arnhem Land, where traditional dance and ceremony were a part of his life as a child. As a teenager he toured Australia with his elders, teaching and conducting traditional dance and music workshops. In his leading roles in *Praying Mantis Dreaming*, *Ninni*, and *Ochres*, he recreated his dance traditions with engrossing spirituality and extended his range with contemporary movement. Mr. Munyarryun plays a pivotal role in Bangarra, collaborating with Mr. Page, discussing ideas for development, and sharing stories from his people. He was a lead performer in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

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